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The Quarterly Conference

**RECORDS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF PULASKI
FOR THE YEARS 1835 TO 1841.**

By R. W. Foster.

Having access to the first quarterly conference record of the Methodist Episcopal church of Pulaski circuit, I thought it might be interesting to the people who now live in the bounds of that work as well as to others who have moved to other parts of the country.

The record is well written and the penmanship of Benjamin Bacon is very fine, as is also the composition, the drafting of resolutions and the reports of conference proceedings are all written in a scholarly style which shows that the education of the early pioneers of Methodism was not neglected. The Methodists of this section as well as all others living here now owe much to the sturdy pioneers of the early days for their labor and sacrifice for the cause of religion and morality in this section of the country.

The first record of the Pulaski church is the quarterly conference meeting of August 29, 1835. The society had no church building but met at Alexander Oliver's. Peter Cart-right was the presiding elder, Wm. H. Window the circuit preacher and Wm. Crain and Edward Bryant the local preachers. The society then belonged to the Rushville circuit. The Pulaski circuit was not organized until 1837.

The greater part of this quarterly conference was taken up in examining the character of local preachers and exhorters. There were ten examined at this conference. A committee was appointed to take into consideration the propriety of building a meeting house in the Granville Bond's neighborhood,

which was done soon after. There is no financial record of this quarterly conference. Wm. Williams was the circuit preacher for the next year.

The next quarterly conference was held November 14, 1835, at Granville Bond's. At this meeting the amount of quarterage collected was \$14.35, with a public collection of \$2.62½, a total of \$16.97½. Paid to Peter Cartright, traveling expense, 50c; quarterage, \$2.12½; to Wm. Williams, \$6.50 and Wilson Piton, \$7.25. (Rather a small salary for three months' service.)

At the second quarterly conference on February 13, 1836, at Washington meeting house, \$57.80 was paid in as quarterage and the succeeding or third quarterly conference, \$42.67. This was the compensation for the presiding elder and circuit preacher for three months' service.

At the fourth quarterly conference, held at Alexander Oliver's, August 20, 1836, it seems that arrangements were made at this conference to organize the Pulaski circuit, but no mention is made of it except a report of a committee to consider the amount necessary for the support of a preacher. The report was in these words: "His salary for the year, \$100; for his wife, \$100; table expenses and provision, \$100.14; a total of \$304.14.

The first quarterly conference of the Pulaski circuit was held in the fall of 1836 or early in 1837 with M. S. Taylor, presiding elder, and John P. Richmond, circuit preacher. The elder received \$2.62½ and the preacher \$15.68 as their quarterly allowance.

At the second quarterly conference, the members formed themselves into a temperance society. Officers were elected, a constitution was adopted with a pledge to sign, in which they agreed to abstain from the use of ardent spirits; were not to furnish it for their families and not to deal in the article in any way.

The circuit preacher was requested to preach on the subject of temperance at the different preaching places at such times as he should consider the most advantageous. Wm. Crain, a local preacher, father of B. B. and E. H. Crain, was the first

secretary of the quarterly conference, and Benjamin Bacon was his successor to that office.

At a quarterly conference meeting held August 26, 1837, it was decided to build a parsonage at Pulaski and the stewards were elected a committee to solicit subscriptions and donations for the same. There seemed to be some difficulty in securing ground, as another committee was appointed in March, 1838, to purchase lots on which to build a parsonage.

At a camp meeting held in August, 1837, fifty-seven persons were added to the church and twenty adults and six children were baptized. Isaac Pool was the circuit preacher in 1838 and during this year the presiding elder, M. S. Taylor, died and resolutions of respect and sympathy were passed, also a committee was appointed to solicit money to erect a suitable monument at his grave. The presiding elder who followed Brother Taylor was Peters Akers, and Wm. H. Taylor as circuit preacher.

A story is told of Peter Akers which illustrates the deep piety of one of the early preachers. A good brother, possessed of plenty of this world's goods, gave Brother Akers a deed to a piece of land, which he took with him, but soon returned it to the man with this explanation: Akers said, "I cannot sing while I have that land, 'No foot of land do I possess, no cottage in this wilderness' ". He had higher and better possessions in the spiritual life than any title to earthly wealth.

The Pulaski circuit covered a great tract of country at this time, reaching as far southeast as Versailles.

At the quarterly conference held April, 1839, a building committee was elected to build a church at Mt. Sterling. At a quarterly conference in August following they reported that they had bought a lot and had \$600.00 subscribed and that they had expended \$185.75 for sufficient timber to erect a frame 30x40 including some labor in this bill, and had a balance of \$414.25 on hand.

At the April conference Peter Akers reported that he had secured permission to use for an indefinite period for camp meeting purposes, the ground located on southeast quarter,

section one, northeast township, Adams county, two north, five west. That is on what is now known as the Edwin Gordon farm, where camp meetings were held for a number of years.

At the quarterly conference April 17, 1839, the circuit preacher was given a reprimand for failing to prepare a report on Sunday Schools.

In August, 1839, there were passed by the quarterly conference resolutions setting forth the need of education as necessary to the proper enlightening of the mind, to qualify the people to appreciate their moral obligations and the value of civil and religious liberty. It was resolved to observe October 28 in celebration of the centenary of Methodism and take a collection for a seminary of learning to be established in Pulaski and a committee was appointed to purchase a site in or adjoining Pulaski and commence the erection of a building as soon as twelve hundred dollars were raised. The committee was: M. D. Strong, P. P. Newcomb, Benj. Bacon, Elish Olcott and Wm. Crain.

Among the quarterage paid in 1840 are: Provisions from Clayton class, \$4.17; cotton sheeting, \$1.50; three bushels meal, 75 cents; five pounds lard, 31¼ cents; eighteen bushels corn, \$3.60; 42 pounds pork, \$1.26; one pair socks, 37½ cents; seven pounds butter, \$1.16; 15 pounds pork, 30 cents; 95 pounds pork, \$2.85; two pounds butter, 33 cents; 100 pounds flour, \$2.00; two yards flannel, \$1.00. All these articles were given to the preacher and counted on his salary from the different members over the circuit, and give us a good idea of the then prevailing prices. Among the expenses of that year is \$2.75 to Peter Akers as traveling expenses to the general conference.

At a quarterly meeting held at Pulaski in 1840, Thomas Rice complained that the circuit preacher failed to keep his appointments at the Hiler school house. The preacher gave as his excuse that there was not a comfortable house to hold services in, which was deemed a good and sufficient excuse by the presiding elder.

At a quarterly meeting held in December, 1840, Benjamin Bacon was elected a committee to draft a constitution to govern the Sunday Schools in the circuit.

At quarterly conference in March, 1841, he made the following report: Resolved that we regard the Sabbath School cause as intimately connected with the cause of religion. As an efficient agent in the spread of gospel truth, and an important auxiliary in filling up the ranks of the Christian church, furnishing a kind of instruction adapted to the wants of youth, preparing the mind for the varied duties of after life. And that we look to the Sabbath School instruction as the most successful means of drying up the fountains of iniquity and as a best guaranty of the religious, civic and political interest of our country.

The Sabbath School society was to be under the supervision of Pulaski circuit quarterly conference, and an auxiliary to the Sunday School Union of the Methodist Episcopal church.

Any person could become a member who would subscribe 25 cents or more.

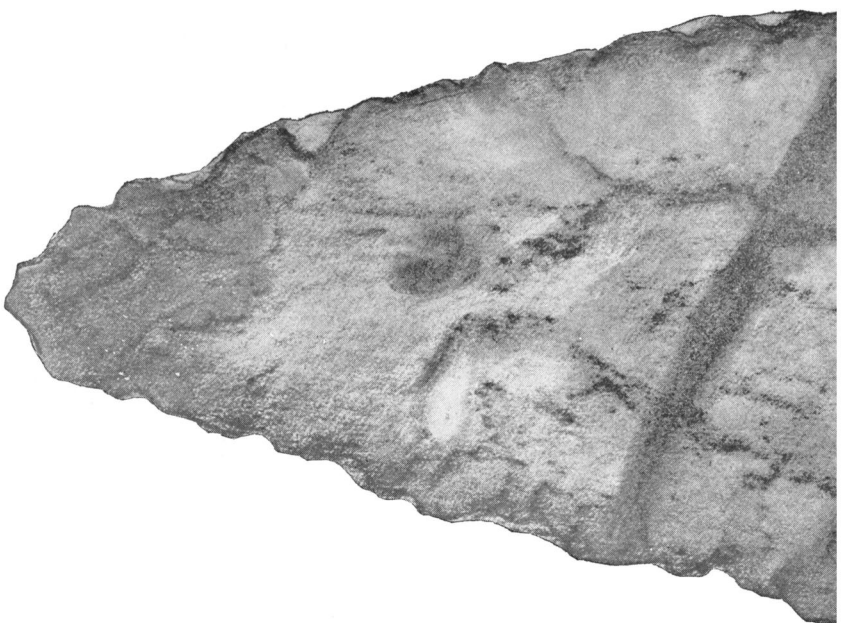
The officers were to be a president, vice-president, treasurer and librarian, and a board of four managers, who together with the circuit agent, (who was the circuit preacher), constituted a board of directors, elected for one year. Any four constituted a quorum to transact business.

This board was to raise funds and purchase books for the library of the society, which were to be distributed to the several schools and exchanged between the different schools as necessary.

The board of directors was to see that each school they established became a member of the society, and that their rules of government conformed to the rules of the society.

J. S. Barger was presiding elder at this time, 1840-41, Wm. Royal, circuit preacher.

At the close of this conference it was agreed to hold the quarterly conference at Piles meeting house.



A rare Illinois Indian Flint Artifact. Purpose Unknown. Plate
is full size. Found by Henry M. Whelpley, near Kaolin, Union
County, Illinois, July 7, 1899.

